



File Code: 1950/1950-3
Date: April 15, 2008

Dear Interested Party:

The Paulina Ranger District is proposing to manage vegetation within the Upper Beaver watershed, which is located approximately 70 air miles east of Prineville, Oregon and within Crook County. The legal location is:

Township 14 South, Range 25 East, Sections 26-36
Township 15 South, Range 24 East, Sections 1, 11-14, 23-27, 35
Township 15 South, Range 25 East, Sections 1-35
Township 15 South, Range 26 East, Sections 18, 19, 30-32
Township 16 South, Range 26 East, Sections 5-8, 17-19, 30

The analysis area is approximately 37,000 acres in size. The proposed project consists of various vegetation management practices including thinning through commercial and non-commercial activities, planting, and prescribed fire. The project is called the Upper Beaver Vegetation Management Analysis.

Why This Project Is Needed

This project is being proposed because the overall vegetation within this watershed needs to be improved in order to move plant communities towards a range of historic conditions. To achieve this proposal the following conditions are needed:

- 1) There is a need for an increase in large late and old structure trees, more large woody debris and hardwood plant species within Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas, and a smaller distribution of western juniper;
- 2) There is a need to reduce the amount of fuel in the forest to more closely resemble historic conditions, which allow for maintaining low intensity fire conditions and a decrease in high intensity fire conditions across the project area and;
- 3) There is a need to provide wood products for public needs and to contribute to the health of local and regional economies through opportunities for employment and income.

Proposed Action

The Paulina Ranger District is proposing to thin approximately 2,923 acres through commercial harvest methods and 8,337 acres through noncommercial means. Excessive fuel from management activities in this project and past projects would be reduced on approximately 11,259 acres through the use of prescribed fire. Fire would also be used to maintain low intensity fuel levels on approximately 5,243 acres, and to reduce ladder and surface fuels on approximately 1,341 acres of untreated vegetation areas. Fuel created by thinning activities would be piled with a machine on approximately 2,500 acres (grapple



piling). A shaded fuel break would be created on approximately 600 feet along each side of the Summit Trail (approximately 450 acres total) to protect the significant values of this historic feature, and provide for firefighter safety in the event of wildfire in this area.

Commercial harvest methods would include the use of tractors on most units, skyline on four units, and helicopter logging on one unit. Areas identified as tractor logging are areas where heavy equipment, such as tractors/skidlers, would be used to remove a commercial product. Approximately two miles of temporary roads would be constructed. No new roads would be constructed and added to the district road system and all roads that are reopened during this project would be closed after management activities are completed.

During the comparison of the proposed action with current management direction, it was determined that certain management activities would not be consistent with Forest Plan direction. Site specific forest plan amendments within this project area may be needed to implement these activities. These include using prescribed fire treatments in old growth areas and moving a designated old growth area to an area more suited as old growth habitat.

I am inviting your comments on this proposed action. Your input will help us focus our analysis on the issues that are significant and specific to the purpose and need for this project. Your comments would be most helpful if received by May 16, 2008. Please mail them to:

Janis Bouma, Project Leader
Paulina Ranger District
7803 Beaver Creek Road
Paulina, OR 97751
Phone: 541-477-6900

You may also send your comments electronically to: comments-pacificnorthwest-ochoco-paulina@fs.fed.us. Comments received, including the names and addresses of those who comment, become a matter of public record. Anonymous submissions will be considered; however an anonymous commenter will not have appeal rights under 36 CFR part 215. In rare circumstances a commenter can petition the Forest Service and be granted confidentiality under the Freedom of Information Act. An interdisciplinary planning team will develop alternatives to this proposed action based on review and public comment.

Sincerely,

/s/ Mike Lawrence
MIKE LAWRENCE
District Ranger